

The New Powerful Lady In Chess and Draughts:

**Queen Isabella the Catholic
According to My 1994 hypothesis**



2025

Govert Westerveld

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1994

The New Powerful Lady in Chess and Draughts: Queen Isabella the Catholic. According to My 1994 Hypothesis

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Dedication

**I dedicate this work to the lovers
of Draughts history**

Foreword

I hope this book serves to inspire others outside of academia to pursue their research, publish it, and share it, because people outside of universities can also carry out interesting research. This is what I will try to demonstrate with this book, whose basis lies in my 1994 hypothesis. It all started in the early 1980s, when I had already read something about the game of draughts/checkers in the Netherlands, but once in Spain I was able to dedicate myself more thoroughly to the history of this game. It was during those years that I began to publish my findings and hypotheses in the Dutch magazine *Het Nieuwe Damspel*.

Shortly after, I came into contact with the Spanish chess historian, Dr. Ricardo Calvo, from Madrid, who visited me in Beniel on several occasions and invited me to attend a chess conference in Germany, which took place in Amsterdam at the end of 1992. Suddenly, I found myself surrounded by the best chess historians in the world, even from Japan. I took with me my hypothesis about the new powerful queen, based on Isabella I of Castile (Isabel la Católica), and presented it to Prof. Günter G. Bauer from Austria, who was deeply interested in publishing it. Thus, in 1994, my work was published, and that is what this book is about.

Prof. Dr. Joachim Petzold, from Berlin, whom I met in Amsterdam in 1992, encouraged me in 1994, after reading my work, to continue with my research. According to him, both Dr. Ricardo Calvo and I would contribute to clarifying the situation of the new powerful queen.

In the Netherlands, I worked closely with Rob Jansen, who used to be at the University of Amsterdam and would send me information about the history of draughts/checkers. I saw the connections between the different games and asked him to research certain aspects further. He did this wonderfully and often brought new and interesting conclusions. I also collaborated with Engineer Gerard Bakker, who revolutionized the history of the Spanish draughts/checkers game, publishing articles in *Het Nieuwe Damspel*. I had the opportunity to visit him once in the Netherlands and have long phone conversations with him about our discoveries. It was no surprise that, at some point, I already knew a great deal about the history of the draughts/checkers game and, also, about the new powerful queen.

In 1997, we published a book that had been the result of years of work between Rob Jansen and me. It was the second time I had discussed Queen Isabella I of Castile (Isabel la Católica) in a book¹. The title, translated into Spanish, was: *The influence of Queen Isabella I of Castile on the new powerful queen in the origin of draughts and modern chess* (ISBN 84-605-6372-3, 329 pages). It included forewords by Dr. Ricardo Calvo and Prof. Dr. Juan Torres Fontes from the University of Murcia (in Dutch).

¹ WESTERVELD, Govert (1997). De invloed van de Spaanse koningin Isabel la Católica op de nieuwe sterke dame in de oorsprong van het dam- en moderne schaakspel. Spaanse literatuur, jaren 1283-1700. In collaboration with Rob Jansen. 329 pages.

Before his death in 2002, Ricardo Calvo repeatedly asked his chess player friend, José Antonio Garzón Roger, to get in touch with me. This request led to a fruitful collaboration, as Garzón, an eminent chess historian, found documents that confirmed two of my theses. The first of these was published in a 2004 book that we wrote together, in which Garzón was able to corroborate my hypothesis about Isabella I of Castile (Isabel la Católica) using documents².

In early 2004, when José Antonio Garzón Roger was collaborating with me, I learned that Stanford University Professor Marilyn Yalom backed my lifelong idea, which dates back to 1987: that the Queen (Dama) in both the game of chess and the game of draughts/checkers was inspired by Isabella I of Castile. She informed me by phone that she had seen my 1997 book, which was in the National Library in The Hague, and sent me an email with the following text:

"Yes, I am familiar with your work and cite it in my book. We agree (as did that great pioneer, Ricardo Calvo) that Isabella I of Castile was deeply involved in the establishment of the new chess queen, and, as you point out, in the game of draughts/checkers too. It was a labor of love for me to research and write Birth of the Chess Queen - a project that took me to the Royal Library in The Hague, to the Cleveland Public Library several times, and to Spain (Madrid and Catalonia)."

² **WESTERVELD, Govert** (2004) La reina Isabel la Católica: su reflejo en la dama poderosa de Valencia, cuna del ajedrez moderno y origen del juego de damas. In collaboration with José Antonio Garzón Roger. Generalidad Valenciana. Conselleria de Cultura, Educació i Esport, Valencia.

As we know, this researcher's book³, *Birth of the Chess Queen*, was enormously popular. I consider this statement on her part to be a great compliment, because when people in academia positively value the work of people outside the academic environment, we can be sure that the work done is of high quality. In the 2004 book I wrote with Garzón, I already made clear in a hypothesis that I did not believe in the authorship of the first book about the game of draughts/checkers in Spain, written in 1547 by Antonio de Torquemada. For me, that book was written by Juan de Timoneda in that year. Six years later, it was confirmed. Garzón was again able, with documents, to confirm that the first book in the world about the game of draughts/checkers was written in 1547 by Juan de Timoneda and not by Antonio de Torquemada⁴.

Since my 1994 study is not publicly available, I am writing this book in several languages with some footnotes for better understanding.

Govert Westerveld

³ **YALOM, Marilyn** (2004) *Birth of the Chess Queen*. London, Pandora Press.

⁴ **GARZÓN ROGER, José Antonio** (2010). "Luces sobre el Ingenio, el pionero libro del juego llamado marro de punta, de Juan Timoneda". Centro Francisco Tomás y Valencia, UNED Alzira-Valencia.

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Erasmus wrote:

'Omnium rerum principia parva sunt'
all great things start small.

In the spirit of Erasmus, who placed reason above greed, I dedicate my work to those who come after us. Not in patents, not in sales, but in leaving a quiet legacy of words, thoughts, and hope, do I seek my true reward. For the soul grows not by possession, but by what it gives.

Erasmus escribió:

"Omnium rerum principia parva sunt" —
todas las grandes cosas tienen comienzos pequeños.

En el espíritu de Erasmo, quien antepuso la razón a la codicia, dedico mi labor a quienes vendrán después de nosotros. No en patentes, ni en ventas, sino en dejar una herencia silenciosa de palabras, pensamientos y esperanza, busco mi verdadera recompensa. Porque el alma no crece por lo que posee, sino por lo que entrega.

4. JAHRGANG 1994

HOMO LUDENS

Der spielende Mensch IV

**Internationale Beiträge des Institutes für
Spelforschung und Spielpädagogik an der Hochschule
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**Historia de la nueva dama poderosa en
el juego de ajedrez y Damas, pp. 103-121**

1 History of the New Powerful Queen in the Game of Chess and Draughts

Govert Westerveld

1.1 Introduction to the History of Draughts

It is disheartening to find the lack of bibliographic material that can decipher where the true origin of this game lies in the history of humanity. Some historians venture to claim that the origin of the game of draughts can be traced back to ancient Egypt, about five thousand years ago; others claim that there is clear evidence of its presence in the amusement of the Roman people of the Empire. Regardless of these and other considerations, I believe these references indicate the possible existence of other games that are scarce and relatively similar to draughts. Later, when referring to much more advanced stages in history, some authors speculate about the existence of the game in the southern region of France in the 11th century, solely through some phrases in certain Provençal poems, which is very unlikely to confirm, given the indeterminate evidence they present.

Sadly curious is the scant regard most historians who have dealt with this aspect have given to Spanish literature, which, in my view, is the most accurate, specific, and "ancient" found regarding this game. Spain is the first nation to publish a "book of draughts," specifically in 1547, while in France, the first publication that presents some concreteness to the game appears in 1668, a voluminous work of about 450 pages written by engineer Mallet, which refers to many things except the truly interesting: "how to play draughts." A simple comparative study between works published in both countries allows me to assert categorically that by the end of the 16th century, the game was technically far more developed in Spain than in early 18th century France. An example of this is the comparison between the contents of the books by Pedro Ruiz Montero from 1591 and the French Quercetano from 1723.

These and many other data allow me to suggest a hypothesis that I consider plausible regarding the strict origin of the game of draughts, focusing historically on Spain in the 15th century, possibly around the reign of the very Catholic Queen Isabella I of Castile. It is evident that the difficulty in crafting a conclusive work on this matter is primarily due to the scarcity of sources. Nevertheless, I believe it is worthwhile to introduce the reader to the historical scenario that could have surrounded this event, while awaiting the completion of such a work.

1.2 An Invention of the 15th Century: The New Powerful Queen

During the last quarter of the 15th century, the Queen in the game of chess, which usually represented an image of the Virgin Mary⁵ (1), underwent a series of changes in her abilities in the game, all aimed at granting her more power and, ultimately, greater mobility on the board. Her movement, which until then was restricted to adjacent squares, was expanded to cover the entire board. This new capacity or "power" of the Queen seems to be linked, according to my studies (2), to the influence that Queen Isabella the Catholic exerted on all aspects of social, political-military, and cultural life at the time. After this change in the characteristics of the Queen's movement, and once her new mobility was realized, her figure and abilities were applied to other pre-existing games that used similar pieces but lacked development, i.e., the pieces reaching the last row of the board were not "crowned" (as we know happens both in chess and modern draughts).

Later, similar games began to be played in which only one type of piece was used, and since having a large number of queens on the board seemed incongruent, the term "dama" was chosen, as they moved across the board similarly to both the traditional queen and the newly created queen in chess.

⁵ **WESTERVELD, Govert** (2015). *The Training of Isabella I of Castile as the Virgin Mary by Churchman Martin de Cordoba*. 172 pages. Lulu Editors.



Draughts (or Checkers) in Ancient Egypt



Board game in Ancient Egypt

*This fact, along with the novelty of the possibility of crowning or promoting pieces, gave rise to games that later became defined as "draughts games," such as the "Turkish draughts" game and, above all, the "Spanish draughts," called in the 16th century the "Juego de Marro de Punta," which seems to be a fusion of the ancient "andarraya" game, the queen figure, and the chessboard. The exact chronological birth of the game is difficult to pinpoint, but it could be dated immediately after 1492, although the first publications about it already appear in the 16th century. In this bibliographic development, the figure of Pedro Ruiz Montero, native of Lucena, is essential, as Lucena was an important location for the Spanish Jews, figures who will, as we shall observe, play a fundamental role in the creation, development, and expansion of the game of draughts.

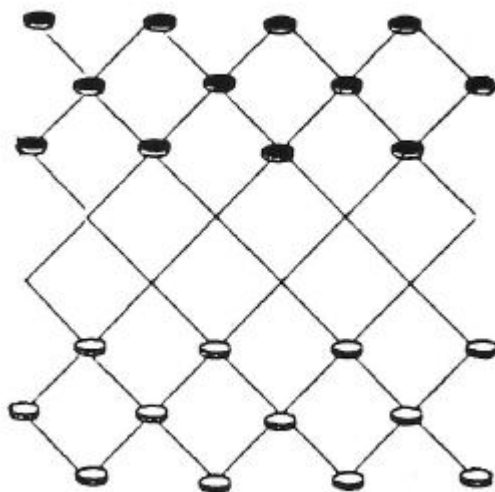
1.3 **Calculorum Ludus**

Before 1480, the year in which dice and card games were prohibited in the Castilian-Aragonese Kingdom (3), a game called "alquerque" was already being played in the Peninsula, in which the Arabs were likely masters. The name of the game, according to some, is of Arabic origin. The game of alquerque-12⁶ was widely described in 1283 in Alfonso X the Wise's manuscript.

Several authors cite and describe different aspects of this game in their books. (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). A simple description of the game would show that it was played between two opponents, each with twelve

⁶ **WESTERVELD, Govert** (2013-2018). The History of Alquerque-12. Total. 3 Volumes.

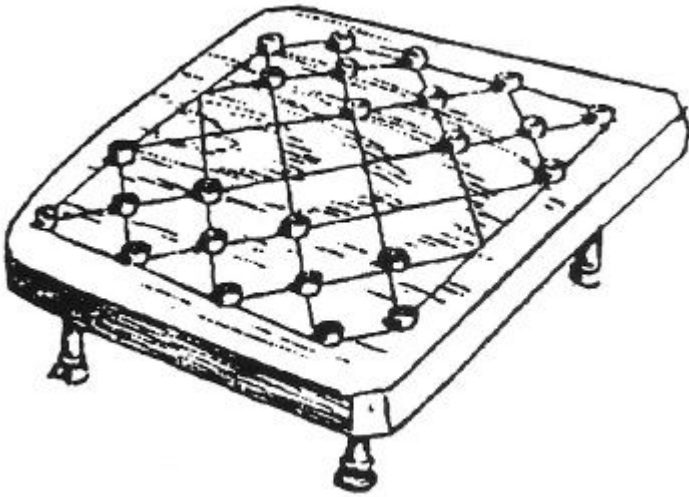
pieces, white and black respectively, and made of glass. Players could capture opposing pieces, and "blowing" was common. (11). However, it had a peculiar feature—it wasn't played on a standard chessboard, but on lines.



The Andarraya game in Spain (15th Century)

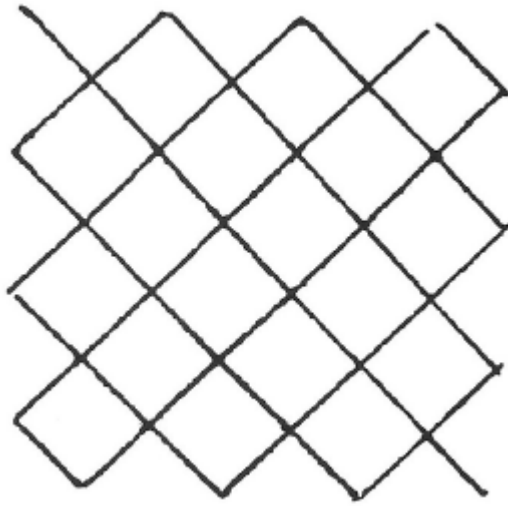
The famous humanist Antonio de Nebrija teaches us that in 1495, there were two similar games on lines: alquerque and andarraya (12), as both were translated into Latin as *calcolorum ludus*. Andarraya was a game played with pieces or stones on a board similar to that of draughts (13), and the first mention of this game appears in a 1454 poem written by Juan de Mena, a Spanish poet and favorite of King John II, who had a close friendship with the Marquis of Santillana:

On the quartana of the Lord King
Because she who never comes
to the Lord King will go away,
let us make an arrangement,
so that there is neither less nor more
For you have the watchtower
you, Lord in everything else,
give the mode by compass,
so that I do not turn back
in the manner of andarraya.



**Draughts on lines in the Philippines
(English Draughts/Checkers)**

However, both the word "dama" or "andarraya" have a new value or meaning in 1495, according to Antonio de Nebrija. (12) I therefore believe that the new powerful queen in chess, as well as the new game of *andarraya*, had been recently formed at that time.



Drawing of the Draughts game in the Philippines (Spanish Draughts/Checkers)

Following the papal bull "*Exigit sincere devotionis effectus*" promulgated in 1478, a perhaps the most controversial period of the reign of the Catholic Monarchs began, which included the establishment of the Inquisition, the expulsion of the Jews, and the conversion of Muslims. The kings did not persecute people but rather beliefs, thus applying the Inquisition to Christians and placing Muslims and Jews between the dilemma of converting or emigrating. Specifically, regarding the Muslims, the Catholic Monarchs strove for their conversion, never adopting an anti-Muslim policy. However, ecclesiastical pressure for rapid belief transitions caused unrest and uprisings. During the early years of the 16th century, there were continuous fights, violence, and conversions.

Non-converted Muslims migrated in large numbers, and by 1503, there were officially no more infidels except the Mudéjares of Aragón and Valencia, who were respected, no doubt, for economic reasons. It is evident that this religious transition, the fear of maintaining certain cultural connotations, and, above all, the phenomenon of emigration, led to a noticeable decline in the practice of alquerque itself. Therefore, it seems logical to think that this and other games underwent transformations typical of a reconversion, not only religious but also cultural.

In the first instance, the twelve pawns of andarraya changed their game setting, and the chessboard was imposed. Later, the appearance of the new Queen or "Dama" in chess, as I described earlier, introduced other elements into the game, and a true invention was being formed or had already been formed. I do not want to claim with the above that the creation of the game of draughts was carried out by converted Muslims. This formation was already happening years before the conversions and migrations, not only of the Muslims themselves but also of the Jews, as we will see later. I only intend to reflect the appearance of a socio-cultural context that was appropriate for the game to strengthen and develop.

1.4 Turkish Draughts

Today, there is still a peculiar variety of draughts played in Turkey, also found in countries such as Kenya (14), Palestine, and North Africa (15). It uses a board similar to that of chess, although all the squares are of the same color. The pieces resemble pawns, and when one of them is crowned, a queen can be formed by placing one pawn on top of another,

thanks to a system that physically allows such a fit. Each player has sixteen pawns, placed starting from the second row of the board. The movement is orthogonal, meaning vertically only forward and horizontally to the right and left, in all cases one square at a time. Additionally, there is a figure of a "queen" who can move backward and cover several unoccupied squares in a single move, very similarly to the queen in our game.

Until now, no one has been able to clarify the strict connections between the two "queens"; their characteristics, mobility, potential, etc., make them very similar. How did the "queen" travel from the Peninsula to Turkey? In my opinion, it was most likely the Spanish Jews, the "Sephardim," who introduced it not only to Turkey, Palestine, and North Africa—areas mentioned earlier and refuges after their expulsion—but also to Kenya and Poland, places where they settled and where similar varieties of this game exist.

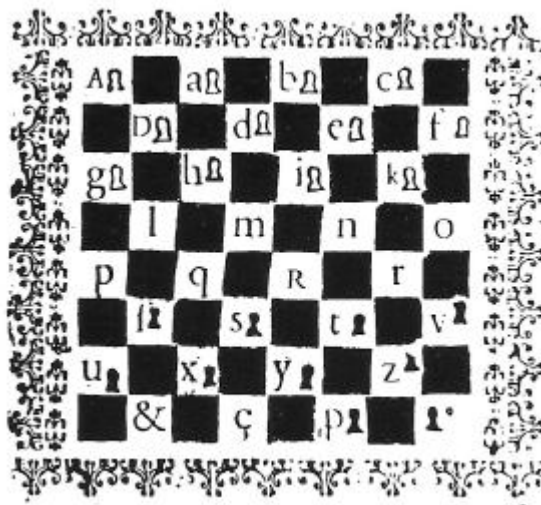
1.5 The "Marro" or "Marro de Punta" Game

The word "marro," of probable Catalan origin, is related to the verb "marrar," meaning "to miss," "to fail," etc. Since false converso Jews were called "marranos," Sebastián de Covarrubias (16) suggests that the name of this game might be related to them. It would be the "different or unimportant game" or "the game of the Jews." In any case, the marro game, like alquerque, encompassed a variety of games with variations of three, nine, and twelve pieces.

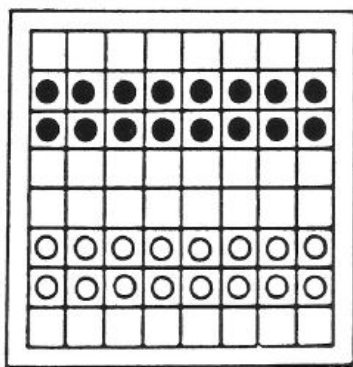
However, the ancient name of the draughts game "marro de punta" already indicated a special game from the collective games of marro. The addition of "de punta" likely means something like "angle." To clarify the meaning of this addition, we read the manuscript of Alfonso X the Wise, which says (17): "The bishops jump three houses in pospunta, similar to the elephants that the kings carried at that time...." Thus, I can conclude that the "marro de punta" game is nothing other than moving the pieces diagonally.

1.6 The Jews

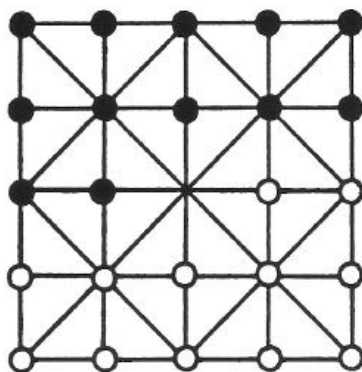
The expulsion of the Jews from Spanish soil, a measure deemed timely by some and unjust and harmful to most, occurred as a natural consequence of the policy initiated by the establishment of the Inquisition. However, until 1492, the Catholic Monarchs maintained a respectful and almost protective attitude toward their communities, with no hint of anti-Semitism. On the other hand, in atmospheres like those of the Church itself, royal advisers, and some social layers, animosity toward them became increasingly intense. By 1483, the Inquisition had eradicated the last Jewish quarters of Seville, Cádiz, and Córdoba. Ferdinand and Isabella then preferred religious unity, despite sensing the economic harm such a measure would cause. Obviously, Jews were given the opportunity to join the Christian community through conversion. In 1492, the ultimatum came: *"leave the land or be baptized"*; the vast majority of the Semitic community, giving a true example of unity and religious conscience, preferred bitter exile.



Marro de Punta Game
(Illustration by Juan de Timoneda, 1635)



Turkish Draughts



The Alquerque Game with 12 Pieces

The number of exiles is unknown, but it is known that by the beginning of the last decade of the 15th century, there were between 250,000 and 300,000 Jews in Spain (18), of whom approximately 50,000 converted. Their exodus closely resembles a massive emigration. The majority of the "Castilian" Jews went to Portugal and then to Africa, where they joined others who had arrived directly by sea; they spread across different areas of the African continent (unfortunately, they were subjected to countless abuses in Morocco). Some went to England, Flanders, Poland, etc., while others boarded ships in Cartagena and various Levantine ports, swelling the colony of Spanish speakers now called Sephardic.

It is evident that both before and after the expulsion, the life of the Jews is a fascinating aspect of our history. Unfortunately, we know very little about them, as the existing bibliography is scarce and disjointed, either due to the secrecy surrounding all their practices or the sad treatment the Inquisition applied to their books. In 1490, the inquisitors of the city of Salamanca burned—next to the convent of St. Stephen—about 60,000 copies of books and writings of Jewish origin. Furthermore, in 1497, the Supreme Court ordered in Valencia that all their books on medicine, surgery, and other sciences and arts be collected (19). These and other plunders of their cultural and scientific heritage, primarily due to the Inquisition's actions, prevent us from delving into a true understanding of Jewish knowledge.

Although this Semitic exodus deprived the Hispanic community of one of the fundamental pillars of its cultural structure, it is evident that the number of converts was not, as I have previously indicated, small. This smaller Semitic community continues to

give a peculiar personality to the thought and science of our country. The well-known Dutch philologist and writer Erasmus states that, at the beginning of the 16th century, Spain is to Europe a strange country in which Christianity is largely mixed with Semitic influences. The sanitation in Spanish lands is reflected in phrases such as: "... *in Spain, there are hardly any Christians...*" or "... *you are full of Jews...*" or "... *Jews abound in Italy...*" (Spanish area). (20).

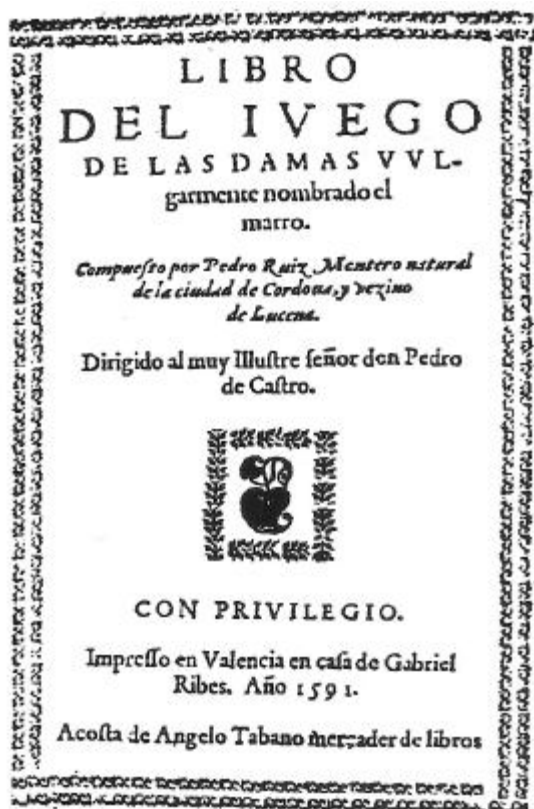
The conversos, who were given truly preferential treatment, continued to dominate, in some way, the world of politics and finance, and this became more evident as the 16th century progressed. Their means and cultural capacity lead me to suppose that the conversos were in a favorable situation to produce and publish new books. In any case, there is a significant historical gap regarding the subject at hand during almost the entire last quarter of the 15th century, a gap that affects not only the game of draughts but also chess itself.

Juan de Lucena, dedicated to printing Hebrew books, fled to Portugal after the establishment of the Inquisition (the Lucena family seems to be conversos). A relative, Luis de Lucena⁷, wrote one of the first chess books (21) in 1496, dedicating his work to Prince Juan.

⁷ The chess book only mentions Lucena, that is to say, the name Luis de Lucena is an error. His father was the mentor of Prince Ferdinand around 1465. Cf. **WESTERVELD, Govert** (2013). Biografía de Juan Ramírez de Lucena (Embajador de los Reyes Católicos y padre del ajedrecista Lucena). 240 pages. Lulu Editors.

WESTERVELD, Govert (2015). The Ambassador Juan Ramírez de Lucena, the father of the chessbook writer Lucena. 226 pages. Lulu Editors.

It is a valuable work whose production, due to the small number of copies, was extremely costly. It is evident that Luis de Lucena's work must have contained certain interesting and attractive elements, because otherwise, the book would have undoubtedly met the fate of the bonfire. In it, the "queen" of chess is already given a more solid and powerful aspect, perhaps symbolizing the immense power of the Catholic Queen.



Frontispiece of the "Book of the Game of Draughts"
(Pedro Ruiz Montero, Valencia 1591)

Among the conversos, certain castes still maintained themselves, with members of the higher-ranking families marrying each other (such as the Cortes, Terogins, Fortezas, Valls, etc.). (22). Some members of these families were the authors of most of the books related to the game of draughts (it is likely that Pedro Ruiz Montero or Lorenzo Valls were Jews). Furthermore, some of the towns of origin of the authors on this game have a great Semitic influence: Pedro Ruiz Montero himself was from Lucena, Alonso Guerra from Osuna, and Diego de Argomedo, a priest from Jerez de la Frontera. Antón de Torquemada, probably of Jewish origin (related to a certain Juan de Torquemada (23), a converso who in the 15th century was a general of the Jeronimite order), and author of a draughts book in 1547, which would be destroyed by the fire of 1812 at the University of Valencia⁸.

In any case, a set of inconsistencies regarding historical data emerges during this period, which leads to a deep haze over the date of the birth of the draughts game. Firstly, the strange absence of publications concerning chess and other similar games, which may be precursors to draughts, in a chronological period that coincides with the stages of control, purification, and expulsion of the Jewish community in the Iberian Peninsula. Secondly, it is inexplicable that many Christian authors of the 16th

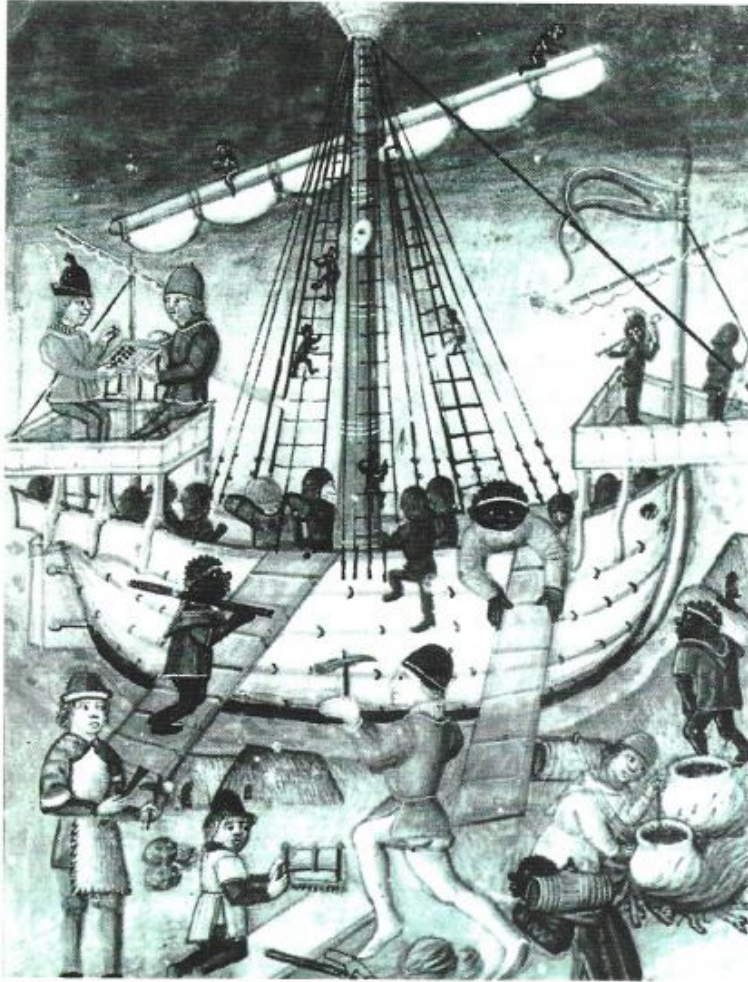
⁸ A fable. Moreover, Anton de Torquemada never wrote a book about the game of draughts/checkers, but Juan de Timoneda did, in 1547. Cf. **GARZÓN ROGER, José Antonio** (2010). "Luces sobre el Ingenio, el pionero libro del juego llamado marro de punta, de Juan Timoneda". Centro Francisco Tomás y Valencia, UNED Alzira-Valencia. **WESTERVELD, Govert** (2015). *El Ingenio ó Juego de Marro, de Punta ó Damas de Antonio de Torquemada*.

century constantly refer to their Roman origins, as there is absolutely no written record of this fact.

Why is there no mention in any publication of the time of the transformation of andarraya, changing into a new game: Marro de punta? Was there an intention to conceal that a highly popular activity had Jewish creators? Although I cannot answer these questions precisely, at least currently, they have served as a starting point, along with a large number of strictly technical considerations, to develop a particular hypothesis regarding the origin or birth of what we now know as the "game of draughts."

1.7 The Renaissance

To better understand the ancient authors of draughts books and their apparent hypothesis (24) that the game was of Roman or Greek origin, it is necessary to write something about the Renaissance. The Renaissance was a prodigious expansion of life in all its forms, which, in general, reached its highest manifestations from 1490 to 1560, without being strictly limited between these two dates. At this time, Europeans experienced a powerful influx of vitality, and the entire civilization of the continent was transformed. The main center of Spanish humanism — in which Valencia stood out due to its contacts with the Italian court of Alfonso V the Magnanimous — was the University of Alcalá de Henares, founded in 1508 by Cardinal Cisneros. In Alcalá, the best Spanish humanists and many foreigners gathered, producing works of such high scientific level as the Polyglot Bible, a monumental edition of the Bible in Hebrew, Greek, Chaldean, and Latin, with grammars and vocabularies (1517).



Between 1475 and 1500: "Andarraya" game in Valencia? Black and white reproduction of a miniature from the manuscript MS Douce 353 in the possession of the "Bodleian Library," Oxford, England. (With permission from "Het Nieuwe Damspel")

1.8 Humanism in Spain in the 15th Century

Therefore, in the cultural aspect, and due to many of the events mentioned, the knowledge of Greco-Roman antiquity expanded and perfected, affecting not only the letters but also directions of thought and political intentions. The determined protection of the Catholic Monarchs and the arrival of great Italian masters to Spain influenced the growth of classical knowledge. The conquest of Granada had raised the issue of whether the Moors of that kingdom should use the Castilian language; for them, their first archbishop, Fray Hernando de Talavera, promoted, under the direction of Friar Pedro de Alcalá, the publication in 1505 of a Hispano-Arabic Dictionary.

Elio Antonio de Nebrija, a towering figure of Spanish Humanism during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs and to whom the definitive introduction of philological science in Spain is credited, was born in Lebrija (Nebrissa in Latin), province of Seville, probably in 1444. When Nebrija finished his Grammar in 1492, he went to show it to the Queen accompanied by his friend Fray Hernando de Talavera, then Bishop of Ávila. The New World had not yet been discovered, but Nebrija seemed to already sense it.

"The purpose of a vulgar grammar was something so new," as Menéndez Pidal says, that the Queen asked him what the use of this work was, and Talavera answered for him with words that Nebrija himself would have used, and which he repeats in the preface of his book, recounting the anecdote: *"The third benefit of this work of mine may be that, when I showed this work to Your Royal Majesty in Salamanca and she asked me for what purpose it could be useful, the very reverend Father Bishop of*

Ávila snatched the answer from me and answered for me, saying that after Your Highness had placed under your yoke many barbarous peoples and nations of foreign tongues, with their defeat, they would need to receive the laws that the victor imposes on the defeated and with them our language, then through this my Art, they could come to understand it, just as we now learn the Art of Latin Grammar to learn Latin."

1.9 Spain at the End of the 15th Century

When we study the history of Spain, we fall from one surprise to another. We see that in 1492, Spain's period as the leading nation began with three significant events in the year 1492 by Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile:

- 1.- The two monarchs finally conquered the last fortress of the Moors in Granada in 1492, completing the Reconquista.
- 2.- In the same year, the Spanish sovereigns expelled the Jews.
- 3.- Also in 1492, Christopher Columbus, with the blessing of Ferdinand and Isabella, prepared for a momentous journey, which resulted in the discovery of the New World and the vast Spanish Overseas Empire.

Around 1494, the year when Christopher Columbus had recently discovered America, Spain, with Isabella of Castile, was the most powerful country in the

world, rushing to demonstrate this to the entire world through political, economic, and also cultural activities. From 1493 onward, the Queen, free from the concerns of war, now devoted herself to the activities that were so dear to her father, becoming a generous protector of all sciences and the arts.



Isabella the Catholic (Image from the 15th Century)

She stimulated the first steps in botany and zoology. Alonso de Córdoba dedicated his astronomical tables to her, and under the patronage of Prince Juan's tutor, Bishop Diego de Deza, the famous Jewish astrologer Abraham Zacuto prepared in his Almanach

Perpetuum with tables of the Sun, Moon, and stars, which Columbus used during his voyages. Medical studies flourished, and the king and queen founded major hospitals in Granada, Salamanca, and Santiago. One of Prince Juan's tutors launched a vast field of archaeological studies and formed a collection of inscriptions, while Professor Antonio de Nebrija studied Roman circuses in Mérida. Isabella and Ferdinand founded several universities, the most important being those of Salamanca and Alcalá de Henares, where some of the most notable humanists of the Renaissance taught. Higher studies became so popular that the great scholar Erasmus could write: "*The Spaniards have reached such heights in literature that they not only provoke the admiration of the most cultured nations in Europe, but also serve as a model to them*" (25).

Thus, it was in this era that Spain entered the Modern Age. We see intellectual changes in the game of draughts, but also in its precursor, chess. Now we also understand better why (Luis de) Lucena dedicated his chess book to Prince Juan, the son of the Catholic Monarchs.

2 Hypothesis on the Origin of the Game of Draughts and the New Powerful Queen

Between 1492 and 1495, the game of draughts was shaped on Spanish soil, with its origin based on a combination of the andarraya game, the figure of the "new powerful queen," and the chessboard. It is assumed that the new game called Marro de punta originated in the Kingdom of Valencia, because the first three draughts books were all printed there. Moreover, Pedro Ruiz Montero, in the preface to his book, states: (26)

"In Valencia, more than anywhere else, it seemed to me the right place to print what I had achieved, because in it, and in its kingdom, more than in the other provinces and kingdoms I visited, I have seen and dealt with skilled players."

In an initial stage, the ancient alquerque (possibly a twelve-piece version, already existing in the 13th and 14th centuries) must have given way to another "game on lines," which, when it began to be played, was called andarraya, already showing some similarity with the current game of draughts. Perhaps it was initially played on a striped board, just as it is still played in the Philippines today. Sometimes with the diagonal to the left—English style—and at other times in the more ancient form—with the diagonal to the right, Spanish style.

Given the limited versatility of andarraya and its deficient potential for "scientific" development, the

game transformed between 1492-1495, through the introduction of the ability to promote pawns, which, once crowned, were called "queens." Thanks to this fundamental change, it acquired a completely unique dimension, with its own personality, and became known as Marro de punta. It is curious how, after this "coronation," which gave the "pawn" immense power, it was called "queen" and not "king" or "lord" or "knight." This fact seems to suggest—at least to me—a "tribute" to the enormous influence that Queen Isabella the Catholic exerted in all aspects of national life.

If andarraya and marro de punta had no connection with the game of draughts, it would have been logical, in my view, that they continued to be practiced in our country alongside our game. However, this is not the case, and both andarraya and marro de punta disappeared as such, with no bibliographic data proving otherwise. In fact, today, they are neither practiced nor known popularly.

The game of draughts was born through a significant transformation of the two games mentioned earlier (alquerque-12, andarraya), and it still evidently contains several elements from both. Specifically, regarding the oldest of them, alquerque de doce (twelve), they are as follows:

The number of pieces (two sets of twelve pieces)

- .- The initial position of the pieces
- .- The method of capturing diagonally
- .- The method of "blowing" the pieces
- .- The color of the pieces: white and black

For a historical event to be corroborated, the existence of direct or bibliographic testimonial

evidence is necessary. Regarding the latter, I can affirm that the first known publications and manuscripts on the game of draughts are of Spanish origin, with two major examples: Antonio de Torquemada (27) in 1547 and Pedro Ruiz Montero in 1591. On the other hand, the existing European literature on the subject refers to the game of draughts (always after these dates and already in the 17th century) as "the Spanish game."

The chronological difference between the years when the game was likely created and the first publications about it is, as we have seen, approximately half a century. This is logically and consistently reflected when we observe the refinement and complexity shown in the descriptions provided in such documents, especially in the endings and endgames with queens. This perfection logically required such a period of study and development.

We must also not forget the inherent connection between the figure of the new "queen" created at this time in the game of chess and the figure of the "queen" or "crowned pawn" in the game of draughts, which implies the existence of common elements between the two games:

- .- The board
- .- The name "pawn" given to the pieces
- .- The movement of these pawns is similar to the one in chess: only forward
- .- The pieces capture in a similar way to the chess pawn: only forward
- .- The queen moves and captures during turns forward and backward across the unoccupied squares
- .- The promotion of the piece or pawn to "queen" occurs on the eighth row of the board

.- The board in the Spanish game of draughts is placed the same way, so that the first square on the right is white.

Consequently, the longest diagonal is on the right.

Chess (with the new queen) and draughts, in my opinion, have a common root: a shared origin in Spain, and possibly from the Kingdom of Valencia, the result of the complex, vast, and peculiar sum of cultures found on our soil. We cannot forget, in this regard, that a chess book by Francesch Vicent (28) was printed in Valencia in 1495 and that the Valencian manuscript of *Scachs d'amor*⁹ (29) also dates from this period. The rapid spread of the new chess across Europe in the 16th century must have been simultaneous with the spread of draughts in the same century, and possibly, the Jews of Spain played an active role in this during the 16th century.

In a contribution to the Dutch draughts magazine *Het Nieuwe Damspel* (2), it was stated that Spain was the "mother" country of this game and that it was introduced into various European countries by the Spaniards or people from Spain (Jews), as another

⁹ **WESTERVELD, Govert** (2015). The Poem *Scachs d'amor* (1475). First Text of Modern Chess.

⁹ This change, from a 'limited jump' to an 'unlimited diagonal move', occurred at the end of the 15th century, along with the modification in the movement of the Queen (Dama), and was part of a series of transformations that sped up and dynamized the game, giving rise to chess as we know it today. My hypothesis is that the figure of the new bishop in the game of chess is based on Cardinal Pedro González de Mendoza, nicknamed the 'third king of Spain', who stood by Isabella I of Castile (Isabel la Católica). **WESTERVELD, Govert** (2015). The Birth of a new Bishop in Chess.

example of Spanish cultural diffusion in 15th and 16th century Europe.

The enormous and invaluable contribution of the Spanish, draughts enthusiast, and bibliophile, Mr. Víctor Cantalapiedra Martín from Valladolid, has been crucial in establishing a historically solid foundation for the argument I have presented so far. The testimony of prestigious historians such as the Dutch Ir. Gerhard Bakker from Utrecht (30) and Mr. Rob Jansen from Amsterdam, corroborating my hypothesis based on in-depth personal research on this topic, can serve as an active catalyst to definitively overturn the relatively modern idea that the game of draughts originated in southern France. Nothing could be further from the truth!

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Books written by Govert Westerveld

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02	1992 2014	Damas españolas: 100 golpes de apertura coronando dama. 116 pages. Lulu Editors. Damas españolas: 100 golpes de apertura coronando dama. 116 pages. Lulu Editors.	84-604-3888-0 None
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		Queen Isabella the Catholic. According to My 1994 Hypothesis	
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I hope that this book will serve to inspire other researchers outside the academic sphere to continue their studies, to publish them, and to share them, since individuals who are not affiliated with university institutions can also make contributions of great interest. I seek to demonstrate this with the present work, which is grounded in my original hypothesis of 1994.

It all began in the early 1980s. A few years later, I came into contact with the Spanish chess historian Dr. Ricardo Calvo, who visited me in Beniel on several occasions. He invited me to attend a congress of chess historians in Amsterdam at the end of 1992, where Professor Günter G. Bauer (Austria) showed a profound interest in the publication of my theses. Ultimately, in 1994, my work was published, becoming the seed of what is presented here.

Professor Marilyn Yalom of Stanford University supported my thesis—maintained since 1987—that the Queen (both in chess and in the game of draughts) was inspired by the figure of Isabella the Catholic. As is well known, her book *Birth of the Chess Queen* achieved great popularity and incorporated many of my ideas. I consider this a great compliment; when scholars of recognized prestige value work carried out outside the university environment, we can be confident that such work possesses exceptional quality. In 2004, my hypothesis was documented and confirmed by the chess historian José Antonio Garzón Roger.